Case 2880

Polycentrus schomburgkii Müller & Troschel, 1848 (Osteichthyes, Perciformes): proposed conservation of the specific name

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is to conserve the specific name of *Polycentrus schomburgkii* Müller & Troschel, 1848, which has been used consistently since publication for a leaf fish (family NANDIDAE) found in the Atlantic drainages of the Guianas and Venezuela, and on Trinidad. The name is threatened by the unused senior subjective synonym *Labrus punctatus* Linnaeus, 1758, for which suppression is proposed.

1. Linnaeus (1758, p. 285) based his description of *Labrus punctatus* on his 1754 (p. 66, pl. 31, fig. 5) description of a specimen in the Museum Adolphi Friderici and Gronovius's (1754, p. 36, no. 87) description of 'Labrus bruneus'. A single specimen labelled *punctatus* is present in Linnaeus's fish collection housed in the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet, Stockholm (catalogue no. NRM 43; see Fernholm & Wheeler, 1983, pp. 252–253) which was designated the lectotype by Kullander (1983, p. 84).

2. Walbaum (1792, p. 250) was the first author to recognise that Linnaeus's specimen of *Labrus punctatus* and Gronovius's description were distinct; he noted 'Labrus bruneus. Gronovii a Linnaeo allegatus, ad Sparos relatus est' [Labrus bruneus of Gronovius, referred to by Linnaeus, is related to *Sparus*]. Gronovius's specimen is lost; his description refers to a species of the family CICHLIDAE.

3. Müller & Troschel (1848, p. 622) published the new generic and specific names *Polycentrus schomburgkii* with a short description. A year later this was followed by a more detailed description and illustration (Müller & Troschel, 1849, pp. 25–26, pl. 5, fig. 2). There are 30 syntypes (2 subadults and 28 juveniles) which were collected in the Essequibo (British Guiana, now Guyana). The specimens are in good condition and are deposited in the Zoological Museum of the Humboldt-University of Berlin, catalogue nos. ZMB 1024 and ZMB 20604.

4. Smitt (1893, p. 11) identified Linnaeus's specimen from the Museum Adolphi Friderici as *P. schomburgkii* and recorded: 'In the *Mus. Ad. Frid.* p. 66, he [Linnaeus] assigns no region to *Sciaena* (*Labrus, Syst. Nat.*) *punctata*, which, to judge by the specimen in the Royal Museum, is the species that has subsequently been named *Polycentrus schomburgkii* by Müller and Troschel'. However, as Smitt's observation was published in *A history of Scandinavian fishes*, until 1983 no worker on the South American fish fauna was aware of his discovery. During the 90 years following Smitt's publication, with very few exceptions (see para. 7 below), only the name *Polycentrus schomburgkii* was used for Schomburgk's leaf fish (see, for example, the more recent works of Eigenmann, 1912, p. 522; Barlow, 1967a, 1967b; Liem, 1970;

Magio Leccia, 1970, p. 102; Vilanova, 1979). Linnaeus's name has never been used for the species.

5. In 1983 two papers were published (Fernholm & Wheeler (July) and Kullander (October)) in which *P. schomburgkii* was recognised as a junior subjective synonym of *L. punctatus*. Both papers noted that in 1758 (but not in 1754) Linnaeus had recorded incorrectly the meristic data of the *punctatus* specimen; Fernholm & Wheeler also noted that Linnaeus's (1754) illustration was very poor. The conclusions in the two papers were very different. Fernholm & Wheeler (1983, p. 253) commented: 'We consider there are no grounds for replacing the well-known binomen *Polycentrus schomburgkii* Müller & Troschel, 1848 with *Labrus punctatus* Linnaeus, 1758. However, as a matter of history, we record that Linnaeus described this species almost a century before it was rediscovered, and can only regret that his description and figure were not accurate enough to gain him the priority of recognition'. In contrast, Kullander (1983, p. 84) noted: 'As already pointed out by Smitt (1892) [sic], the Linnaean specimen is of the species better known as *Polycentrus schomburgkii* Müller & Troschel, 1849 (family Nandidae) ... The species epithet has priority over *P. schomburgkii* Müller & Troschel, *P. tricolor* Gill, 1858 and *Mesonauta surinamensis* Sauvage, 1882' (see para. 7 below). However, Kullander's comment, inappropriately included in an extensive revision of the genus *Cichlasoma* (family CICHLIDAE), has not influenced the use of the name *Polycentrus schomburgkii* during the past nine years (see, for example, Nelson, 1984, p. 314; Hamel, 1987, p. 17; Sterba 1987, p. 674; Antonio Cabré, Kullander & Lasso, A., 1989, p. 138; Bauchot & Dessouter, 1989, p. 24; Eschmeyer, 1990, p. 325; Rucks, 1992, p. 420; Staeck, 1992, p. 584). These authors followed the 135 year-old usage, as was recommended by Fernholm & Wheeler (1983). Only Stawikowski (1992, p. 687) noted Kullander's statement on the priority of the specific name *punctatus* over *schomburgkii*, and urged use of the earlier name; he did not refer to Fernholm & Wheeler's recommendation.

6. *P. schomburgkii* is the only species included in *Polycentrus* and the name has been used from 1848 until the present in very nearly all scientific and popular papers and works and all specialists, ichthyologists as well as aquarists, know Schomburgk's leaf fish by this name. It would cause unnecessary confusion if Linnaeus's name were now to be introduced and, in the interests of stability in the nomenclature, I propose that it be suppressed.

7. In 1858 Gill (pp. 373–374) described a second nominal species of *Polycentrus* as *P. tricolor*, and in 1882 Sauvage (p. 173) proposed *Mesonauta surinamensis*. Both are clearly junior subjective synonyms of *Polycentrus schomburgkii*. The synonymy between *schomburgkii* and *tricolor* was recorded by Regan (1906, p. 378), Eigenmann (1912, p. 522) and Kullander (1983, p. 84), and that between *schomburgkii* and *surinamensis* by Bauchot & Dessouter (1989, p. 24). Günther (1861, p. 370) and Eigenmann & Eigenmann (1891, p. 66) used the name *tricolor* as well as *schomburgkii*, and Jordan (1887, p. 588) used only *tricolor* but, with the exception of these authors, neither of the names *tricolor* and *surinamensis* has been used.

8. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *punctatus* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the binomen *Labrus punctatus*, for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy;

(2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Polycentrus* Müller & Troschel, 1848 (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy *Polycentrus schomburgkii* Müller & Troschel, 1848;

(3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *schomburgkii* Müller & Troschel, 1848, as published in the binomen *Polycentrus schomburgkii*;

(4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *punctatus* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the binomen *Labrus punctatus* and as suppressed in (1) above.

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